

HONORABLE BENJAMIN H. SETTLE

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT TACOMA

AARON PAUL KHAMNOY,

Plaintiff,

v.

NATIONAL RAILROAD PASSENGER
CORPORATION d.b.a AMTRAK; and
DOES ONE THROUGH FIFTY,

Defendants.

Case No. 3:19-cv-06223-BHS

**DEFENDANT NATIONAL RAILROAD
PASSENGER CORPORATION'S
MOTION TO CONTINUE THE TRIAL
DATE AND REOPEN DISCOVERY**

**NOTE ON MOTION CALENDAR:
JUNE 17, 2022**

I. INTRODUCTION & RELIEF REQUESTED

On May 2, 2022, Plaintiff disclosed that he had undergone a laminectomy with discectomy in early April 2022, and that his surgeon was recommending a future spinal fusion procedure. With the exception of a progress note produced on May 23, 2022, no records from this procedure or Plaintiff's subsequent rehabilitation period have been produced. Plaintiff has agreed to reopen discovery regarding his recent and future back surgeries, but has not agreed to continue the trial date even though there is not adequate time between now and the present trial date of August 23, 2022, even if the new medical records were received immediately.

Defendant National Railroad Passenger Corporation ("Amtrak") therefore moves for an order continuing the trial date, currently scheduled for August 23, 2022 and reopening discovery for the following purposes of (1) obtaining additional medical records relating to Plaintiff's recently disclosed back surgery and new claim that an additional future surgery is necessary, (2)

DEFENDANT NRPC'S MOTION TO CONTINUE
TRIAL DATE AND REOPEN DISCOVERY - 1
CASE NO. 3:19-cv-06223-BHS

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LANE POWELL PC
1420 FIFTH AVENUE, SUITE 4200
P.O. BOX 91302
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98111-9402
206.223.7000 FAX: 206.223.7107

obtaining Plaintiff's physical therapy records following this surgery, (3) deposing Plaintiff's orthopedic surgeon, Dr. Raj Kakarlapudi, (4) deposing Plaintiff's physical therapist, and (5) a second deposition of Plaintiff regarding events since his prior deposition, including his objective and subjective functioning before and after the recent surgery.

At this time, Amtrak still does not have the medical records relating to the back surgery, or even his physical therapy treatment notes, and it needs additional time to complete discovery, including a deposition of Plaintiff's orthopedic surgeon and physical therapist, and a further deposition of Plaintiff. Thus, this motion is necessary. For the reasons set forth below, Amtrak's motion to continue the trial date and other deadlines should be granted as follows:

DEADLINE	CURRENT DATE	NEW DATE
FIVE DAY JURY TRIAL set for 9:00 AM	8/23/2022	3/28/2023
All motions related to discovery must be filed by	8/23/2021	9/5/2022
Discovery completed by	9/20/2021	10/3/2022
Pretrial conference will be held at 11:00 AM on	8/8/2022	3/13/2023
Agreed neutral statement of the case and deposition designations due by	8/2/2022	3/6/2023

II. PERTINENT PROCEDURAL HISTORY AND RELEVANT FACTS

Plaintiff had multiple surgical procedures between February 2018 and December 2019. Declaration of Andrew G. Yates ("Yates Decl."), June 2, 2022, at ¶ and Ex. A attached thereto.

On December 19, 2019, Plaintiff filed his complaint, alleging that he sustained injuries as a result of the derailment of Amtrak Train 501. Dkt. 1.

On March 18, 2020, this Court entered an order setting jury trial and pretrial dates. Dkt. 9.

Subsequently, the parties exchanged discovery throughout the course of this litigation up to the September 20, 2021 discovery cutoff. *See* Dkt. 9.

1 On January 5, 2022 the parties filed pretrial motions and trial briefs and had a pretrial
2 conference on January 5, 2022. Dkt. 31.

3 On January 25, 2022, this Court issued a minute order resetting the trial and certain pretrial
4 deadlines due to COVID concerns. The Court also scheduled a second pretrial conference for
5 August 8, 2022. Dkt. 33, 35.

6 On April 5, 2022—for the first time in approximately 28 months—Plaintiff underwent a
7 surgical procedure (“Revision Lumbar Laminectomy with Discectomy @ Right L4-5”).
8 Throughout the course of this litigation, only the January 13, 2020 note “indicated” a potential
9 need to proceed with a lumbar laminectomy. Yates Decl., at ¶ 3 and Ex. B attached thereto. Since
10 Plaintiff did not undergo that procedure at any time between January 20, 2020 and the September
11 21, 2021 discovery cutoff, and since Plaintiff last saw his orthopedic surgeon on January 13, 2020
12 based on the records Amtrak had,¹ Amtrak was under the impression that Plaintiff’s pain had
13 improved and there was no need to undertake that procedure. For reasons unknown to Amtrak,
14 Plaintiff elected to undergo the lumbar laminectomy seven months after the discovery cutoff.
15 Yates Decl., at ¶ 4. In fact, Plaintiff never mentioned anything about undergoing this procedure
16 in his pretrial motions or trial briefs. It was not until May 2, 2022 that Plaintiff disclosed this
17 surgical procedure. Yates Decl., at ¶ 5 and Ex. C attached thereto.

18 Then, on May 23, 2022, Plaintiff supplemented his prior discovery production with the
19 most recent physical therapy notes available. Yates Decl., at ¶ 6 and Ex. D attached thereto.
20 According to one of these notes, dated May 19, 2022, Plaintiff reported that after the lumbar
21 laminectomy procedure he experienced “less pain with: prolonged standing, prolonged sitting.
22 Patient’s pain is mild to moderate and improving.” Ex. D (pp. 3-6). Dr. Raj Kakarlapudi referred
23 Plaintiff for “post-op lumbar spine rehabilitation to restore strength, stability, and range of motion”
24

25 ¹ According to Plaintiff’s May 23, 2022 supplemental discovery, Plaintiff saw Dr. Kakarlapudi on
26 October 22, 2020 for the first time after January 13, 2020. Yates Decl., at ¶ 6 and Ex. D attached
27 thereto. However, Amtrak does not have any records relating to the October 22, 2020 date of
service. Nor does Amtrak have treatment notes relating to the January 26, 2022 date of service
with Kim Nguyen or March 29, 2022 with Cherelle Edwards. Yates Decl., at ¶ 7.

1 and “will recommend continued conservative care to allow additional time to heal. Goals are to
 2 restore normal function, relieve pain and symptoms....” *Id.* Amtrak does not have any of
 3 Plaintiff’s physical therapy notes.

4 Additionally, Plaintiff’s counsel noted in his May 23, 2022 email that Dr. Kakarlapudi has
 5 recommended a spinal fusion. Ex. C. Amtrak does not have any records relating to this
 6 recommendation.

7 **III. AUTHORITY AND ARGUMENT**

8 **A. Standard for Granting Continuances**

9 Federal Rule 16 governs motions to modify scheduling orders and states that a court may
 10 modify a schedule for “good cause.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 16(b)(4); *see also Johnson v. Mammoth*
 11 *Recreations, Inc.*, 975 F.2d 604,608 (9th Cir. 1992) (“[t]he district court may modify the pretrial
 12 schedule if it cannot reasonably be met despite the diligence of the party seeking the extension.”).
 13 “[T]he focus of the inquiry is upon the moving party’s reasons for seeking modification.” *Id.* Due
 14 to Plaintiff’s recent surgical procedure and Plaintiff’s late disclosures, Amtrak has good cause to
 15 ask for an extension of the trial date and related deadlines.

16 To consider whether a motion for a continuance should be granted, the Ninth Circuit has
 17 identified four factors to consider: (1) the moving party’s diligence in its efforts to ready its defense
 18 prior to the date beyond which a continuance is sought; (2) whether the continuance would have
 19 served a useful purpose if granted; (3) the extent to which granting the continuance would have
 20 inconvenienced the court, opposing party, and witnesses; and (4) the amount of prejudice suffered
 21 by the moving party due to the denial of the continuance. *United States v. Zamora-Hernandez*,
 22 222 F.3d 1046, 1049 (9th Cir. 2000) (citing *United States v. Flynt*, 756 F.2d 1352, 1359) (9th Cir.
 23 1985)). “[T]he weight given to any one [of these factors] may vary from case to case.” *United*
 24 *States v. Kloehn*, 620 F.3d 1122, 1127 (9th Cir. 2010) (quoting *Armant v. Marquez*, 772 F.2d 552,
 25 556 (9th Cir. 1985)).

B. The Recent Lumbar Laminectomy Surgery and the New Recommendation for Spinal Fusion Surgery Require a Continuance

Throughout the course of this litigation, Amtrak has acted with diligence and was unaware that Plaintiff was scheduled for a lumbar laminectomy surgery or that a treating provider recommended spinal fusion surgery. Although the life care plan refers to a lumbar laminectomy, this was apparently a topic that Plaintiff's life care planner orally discussed with Dr. Kakarlapudi in July 2021. *See* Ex. E (Preliminary Life Care Plan). With the exception of a single reference from January 13, 2020 stating that a lumbar laminectomy was "indicated" (Ex. B), there are no other medical records reflecting this recommended procedure. In fact, all of the orthopedic procedures that the life care planner incorporated into his life care plan were discussed with Dr. Kakarlapudi in July 2021. *See* Ex. E (Preliminary Life Care Plan). No medical documentation was attached in support of the life care plan. *Id.* Also, according to the medical records that Amtrak received, Plaintiff last saw his orthopedic surgeon on January 13, 2020 (Ex. B), so Amtrak had no reason to believe that Plaintiff would undergo the procedure 28 months later. The disclosure that Dr. Kakarlapudi will attempt to testify that Plaintiff needs a future fusion procedure is entirely new.

Amtrak needs a four-month continuance to mitigate the prejudice caused by these late disclosures. Specifically, Amtrak needs to obtain the records from the new providers, including the orthopedic surgeon who performed the lumbar laminectomy and has apparently recommended a spinal fusion, as well as the physical therapist who treated Plaintiff post-operatively. Amtrak also seeks to redepose Plaintiff to get an understanding of his present condition and the extent of any functional limitation he is claiming. This additional discovery is necessary given that Plaintiff seeks millions of dollars in medical expenses as well as millions of dollars to move into an assisted living facility due to his alleged physical limitations. *See* Ex. E. Thus, the discovery Amtrak is seeking is essential to testing the legitimacy of Plaintiff's future economic and non-economic

claims. Amtrak clearly is entitled to develop its defenses to these claims through discovery regarding the new records, medical providers, and Plaintiff himself.

The continuance would serve a useful purpose because it will give Amtrak time to obtain new discovery, review it, and determine what follow up is necessary, including but not limited to depositions of Plaintiff's treating providers. There is no reason to believe that the requested continuance would cause any significant inconvenience. If Amtrak's request for a continuance is denied, Amtrak will be prejudiced.

Additionally, a continuance will allow Amtrak to obtain receipts to Plaintiff's billing statements as well as treatment notes and review Plaintiff's medical records to determine if these expenses are appropriate. Ultimately, allowing Amtrak to conduct meaningful discovery will help it evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of Plaintiff's claims and Amtrak's defenses at trial. All of these factors weigh in favor of granting Amtrak's motion for a continuance.

IV. CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, this Court should grant Amtrak's motion to continue the trial date and reopen discovery and instruct the Clerk to issue a new order resetting the above dates.

DATED: June 2, 2022

LANE POWELL PC

By s/ Tim D. Wackerbarth
 Tim D. Wackerbarth, WSBA No. 13673
wackerbartht@lanepowell.com
 Andrew G. Yates, WSBA No. 34239
yatesa@lanepowell.com

1 LANDMAN CORSI BALLAINE & FORD, PC

2
3 By s/ Mark S. Landman
4 Mark S. Landman, *Pro Hac Vice*
5 mlandman@lcbf.com
6 John A. Bonventre, *Pro Hac Vice*
7 jbonventre@lcbf.com

8 *Attorneys for Defendant National Railroad*
9 *Passenger Corporation*
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